



# The Colorado Opportunity Project

FACT SHEET | 2015

## What is the Colorado Opportunity Project?

The **Colorado Opportunity Project** supports low-income Coloradans with economic opportunities for upward mobility, and a pathway to the middle class that ends their reliance on safety net programs. State agencies are aligning their efforts to deliver evidenced-based programs to Coloradans to help move them up the economic ladder and towards self-sufficiency. The alignment of government programs eliminates fragmentation among state agencies, reducing duplication of services and making more efficient use of taxpayer dollars all while providing new economic opportunities to low-income Coloradans.

In 2013, 13% of all Coloradans lived in poverty<sup>1</sup>. The impacts of poverty are significant. Those in poverty are more likely to have complex health conditions, and treating these conditions is expensive. Providing child care and food assistance is expensive. Housing Coloradans in the criminal justice system is expensive. **The Project uses high-quality, cost-effective, evidence-based programs already available in Colorado and improves them with better coordination and well-defined goals and measures, saving taxpayer resources and moving citizens out of poverty and towards independence.**

The Colorado Opportunity Project is a collaboration of the Colorado Departments of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF), Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), and Human Services (DHS). Key agency initiatives, including 10 Winnable Battles, Two-Generation, and the Accountable Care Collaborative, as well as the Cross-Agency Collaborative on Quality Measurement, are tied together to deliver the Colorado Opportunity Project framework. Representatives from the Departments serve on the **Colorado Opportunity Project Steering Committee** charged with developing the Project framework.

*Inequalities in opportunity continue to increase in the United States, creating disparities in test scores, college enrollment rates and family formation patterns.*



*Percentage of Coloradoans living in poverty<sup>2</sup>:*

**13%**



<sup>1</sup> 2013 American Community Survey (a report by the U.S. Census Bureau)

<sup>2</sup> Colorado Children's Campaign, 2014 Kids Count Data Book



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## How will the Project Work?

The Project creates a shared understanding of what opportunity looks like in Colorado, and aims to coordinate the efforts of HCPF, CDPHE, DHS, and community partners to align initiatives and support economic opportunity for Coloradans in a streamlined and efficient way. To do this, the Project will:

- **Create common performance indicators (measures):** The Colorado Opportunity Project establishes a common set of indicators to define opportunity in Colorado, so government agencies and private initiatives work toward the same goals with the same understanding of what needs to be done. The indicators include common milestones that are important to success in life, like being born at a healthy weight, being prepared for school and graduating from high school.

### INDICATORS (measures) may include:



- ▶ Intended Pregnancies
- ▶ Emotional Well-being of Parents
- ▶ Access to Affordable Food
- ▶ School Readiness & High School Graduation
- ▶ Family Income
- ▶ Grade Level Advancement

- **Identify evidenced-based interventions (programs) that work:** The Colorado Opportunity Project Steering Committee will work with stakeholders across Colorado to identify evidence-based programs that help Coloradoans reach the important milestones toward self sufficiency and high opportunity.

### INTERVENTIONS (programs) may include:



- ▶ Family Planning Nurse Home Visiting Programs
- ▶ Early & Periodic Screening Diagnosis & Treatment
- ▶ Healthy Communities
- ▶ Early Literacy and Math Programs
- ▶ Workforce Development & Job Training

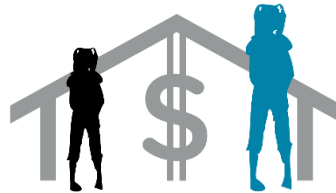


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- **Collaborate across government agencies, and partner with the private sector and community partners:** The Colorado Opportunity Project creates a framework to align government, private sector, and community-based efforts to foster health and educational attainment and remove barriers for Coloradans to move up the economic ladder at every life stage. This efficient use of resources will make taxpayer dollars and private funds go farther to address poverty and health inequalities and make Colorado the healthiest state in the nation—with the healthiest economy, too.

*Research tells us that children living in poverty are more likely to **start school at a disadvantage**, be in **poor health**, and live in **poverty as an adult**.<sup>1</sup>*



**Colorado ranks  
22<sup>nd</sup> in overall  
child well-being<sup>1</sup>**

## Project Framework

The Colorado Opportunity Project Framework is a model for creating a pathway to the middle class at every critical point in the life cycle. The model includes **indicators** that tell us whether people are getting closer to economic independence, or losing ground. “Interventions,” or **programs**, are applied at each life stage in a cost effective manner to provide opportunities for people to reach these important milestones and climb the economic ladder.

Below are the indicators and interventions the Colorado Opportunity Project is using to track Colorado’s progress in addressing success at every life stage and provide opportunity to improve economic status. The framework paints a picture of the factors that lead to poverty, the impact of poverty on health and well-being, and the interventions that create opportunities for prosperity and a clear pathway to personal responsibility and transitioning up and out of safety net programs.

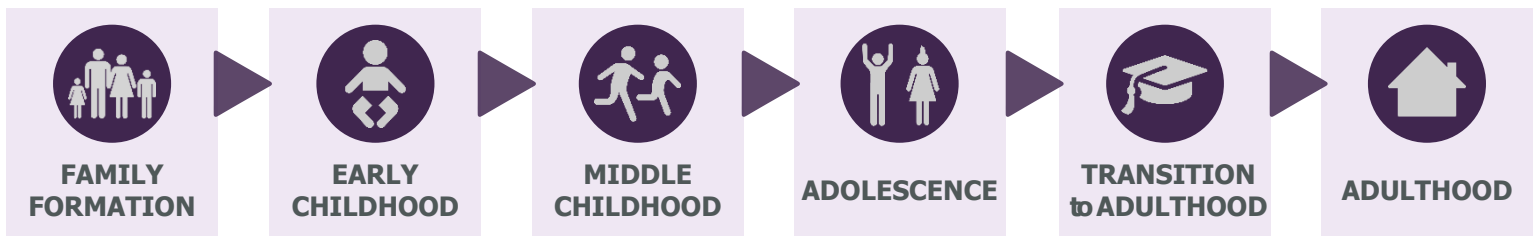
<sup>1</sup> 2014 Colorado Children’s Campaign, Kids Count Data Book



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## Project Framework



### **Family Formation (positive circumstances at birth)**

A planned pregnancy, born at healthy birth weight, to a dual parent household without maternal depression.

- Interventions at this life stage may include home visiting programs for pregnant women and postpartum families, and programs that connect parents to employment opportunities and child care.



### **Early Childhood (ages 0 – 5)**

School readiness, healthy social emotional skills and the families access to affordable, nutritious food

- Interventions at this life stage may include early literacy and prevention programs, medical homes and consistent well-child checks, and programs to help children with physical, emotional or intellectual risks.



### **Middle Childhood (ages 6 – 11)**

Math/Reading Skills and healthy social emotional skills.

- Interventions at this life stage may include tutoring and literacy support for children, parenting support programs, and job training and job opportunity for parents.



### **Adolescence (ages 12 – 17)**

Graduates from high school on time, has developed healthy social emotional skills and has not been convicted of a crime, nor become a teen parent.

- Interventions at this life stage may include behavioral health screening, substance abuse disorder prevention and treatment, pregnancy prevention programs, and mentoring programs for those at-risk for dropping out of school.



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## Transition to Adulthood (ages 18 – 29)

Currently sustainably employed having attended post-secondary education and has good physical/mental health.

- Interventions at this life stage may include math and writing remediation programs at high school and community colleges, job training and opportunity programs, and transition to new health care coverage for those who had been covered by Medicaid.



## Adulthood (ages 30 – 40)

Employment status, has good physical /mental health and is a middle class household (300% FPL<sup>1</sup>)

- Interventions at this life stage may include access to health care, medical homes, and opportunities for adult education and career development.



## Older Adulthood (ages 40-64) & Older Adulthood (ages 65+)

Indicators and Interventions to be determined

## Who Can I Contact for More Information?

For more information about the Colorado Opportunity Project, contact the project manager:

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<sup>1</sup> FPL = Federal Poverty Level